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Testimony to the Planning and Development Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

March 11, 2016

RE: Support for Substitute SB 422, An Act Concerning Residential Water Rates,
Public Drinking Water Supply Emergencies and Sellers of Bottled Water

The recent contract between the MDC and the Niagara Water Bottling Company raises numerous concerns about how a water company – any water company in Connecticut - can operate at present in the absence of a state water plan and citizen oversight. Much has been made of the preferential treatment Niagara will receive trucking our water out-of-state in a drought while we residents conserve, and of the generous discounts it will profit by while using the infrastructure that we paid to build. I am appalled that this is permissible.

But I also feel that this is poor economic policy. Given that Connecticut's primary competitive advantage for decades to come is likely to be its abundant supply of high-quality water, is it wise to allow water bottling companies to lock up hundreds of millions of gallons of water annually for no more than 75 jobs? It is a terrible ratio for a limited resource.

I urge you to support SB 422 strengthened by:

- focusing in Section 1 on prioritizing local residents' needs over those of commercial entities in the business of exporting water;
- specifying in Section 2 that water bottling businesses may not be charged lower water rates than residents;
- specifying in Section 3 that Clean Water Project Charges may not be lower for water-exporting businesses than for residents;
- including the establishment of a strong, transparent citizen oversight committee for the MDC whose members are broadly representative of the public and who are required to report publicly to their constituents on a regular basis.

- Establishing a moratorium on new water capacity agreements over 250,000 GPD until the state water plan is in place.

Thank you for your consideration.